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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of multinational corporations has necessitated theoretical and practical concerns for operating and managing organizations in varying cultural environments. The Navy Public Works Centers (PWCs) provide engineering, maintenance, rehabilitation construction, transportation and housing to U.S. Navy customers around the world. Interviews and questionnaires with 1607 employees from six PWCs (San Francisco, Norfolk, Great Lakes, Hawaii, Japan, and the Philippines) examine employee perceptions of organizational variables and assess the interrelationships between perceived managerial and organizational effectiveness, and employee motivation and satisfaction. Workers in Hawaii, Japan and the Philippines expressed fewer negative perceptions of managerial effectiveness and felt more positive with respect to reward contingencies and esprit de corps than workers in the continental United States. United States workers emphasized satisfying needs at work while overseas workers focused on getting the job done, having lower expectations of what their jobs should provide. Hawaiian interviewers reflected influence from east and west. Since motivators, satisfaction and perceptions of managerial practices differ as functions of culture, rewards in one culture may be less effective for employees in another culture. (NRB)

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A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON OF MANAGERIAL PRACTICES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOME VARIABLES[1]

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A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Managerial Practices and Their Relationship to Organizational Outcome Variables

While an understanding of the relationship between culture and organizational functioning has been an issue of concern for many years, the rapid growth of both the size and the number of multinational corporations has led to a growing importance of both theoretical and practical concerns of operating and managing organizations in varying cultural environments. An earlier study, focusing on values of employees in organizations located in different cultures, revealed that both cultural and work values, as well as reported employee job satisfaction differed as a function of culture. Specifically, the profiles of personal values of workers in comparable organizations located in Japan, the United States and the Philippines were in fact different.

Of particular interest here are the effects of culture upon employees' acceptance of and reactions to various managerial and supervisory practices. If organizations are all being managed by individuals of one cultural/ethnic background (which is likely to influence managerial philosophy), and the workforce they are managing is of another, these cultural differences may influence the effectiveness of various managerial practices, and may in turn affect overall organizational functioning.

While the need for cross-cultural studies has always been acknowledged, one central problem in doing comparative cross-cultural research is the difficulty of locating comparable organizations in different cultures. That was one of the major advantages of this study. The organizations we investigated, the Navy Public Works Centers (PWCs), provided a rare opportunity to compare cultural effects across highly similar organizations. The PWCs are essentially service organizations. They provide engineering, maintenance, rehabilitation

construction, transportation and housing to U.S. Navy customers in locations around the world. Six locations were included in this study, three within the continential United States (San Francisco, Norfolk, Great Lakes), one here in Hawaii, one in Japan and one in the Philippines. The Centers are almost identical in terms of their structure, the tasks performed, and the cultural/ethnic background of managers. Since the centers really service one large organization, the United States Navy, the nature of the services provided and the means for accomplishing work are consistent across sites.

Another important aspect of the centers is that the responsibility for operation lies within a division of their parent organization in Washington, D.C., so most of the policies governing their operation are standard across sites. It is also the case that top and middle managers are predominantly white, male U.S. citizens with similar cultural backgrounds. The only major difference across locations is the composition of the workforce and supervisors. At these levels, employees are drawn from each local area, and possess the ethnic and cultural characteristics from each area.

The purpose of the present study was (1) to examine employee perceptions of organizational variables (i.e., managerial effectiveness, organizational character, and organizational effectiveness) across comparable organizations located in different cultures and (2) to assess the interrelationships between perceived managerial and organizational effectiveness, employee motivation and satisfaction.

Our sample was made up of 1607 employees from the six PWCs. Respondents were drawn from each hierarchical level in the organization. Data were collected by means of interviews and questionnaires. The interviews were conducted early in the study and provided input to the construction of the questionnaires. The questionnaires measured perceptions of managerial effectiveness (e.g.,

scheduling, ordering and handling of material and equipment) organizational character (e.g., accuracy of reward contingencies) motivation, and satisfaction. Information regarding motivation was obtained by having employees respond to an open-ended question which asked "What are some of the specific things which occur at work that make you feel good about working?" The other information was obtained by means of structured questions, or those with response alternatives provided.

Now if you will take a look at Table 1 you will see that in general fewer negative perceptions of managerial effectiveness were expressed by workers in Hawaii, Japan and the Philippines than were expressed by workers at centers in the continental United States. Now turning to Table 2, it shows that workers at centers outside the CONUS also felt more positive with respect to the accuracy of reward contingencies and reported levels of esprit de corps and satisfaction.

A possible clue as to these obtained differences was suggested by employee responses to the open-ended motivational questions. Table 3 presents the rankings of categories generated from responses to the question that asked about the specific things that made workers feel good about working. The categories presented here include the five top ranked motivators for each location. Sample responses for the most important categories are presented in Table 4.

As you can see, there are differences across locations as to the things workers report as "making them feel good about working." Specifically, feelings of accomplishment are less important in Japan, while having the tools, equipment and supplies, or cooperative co-workers are less important in CONUS. A general interpretation gleaned from these data was that at the centers in Japan and the Philippines, workers were more motivated by task

related job occurrences, whereas those in CONUS were more concerned with things external to doing the job itself. Pay, feelings of accomplishment job challenge, the workgroup climate and social aspects of the job are not closely related to the specific tasks they perform. Tools, equipment and supplies, cooperation of co-workers and respect from supervisors are directly related to the job itself, and are more characteristically sources of motivation for workers in Hawaii, Japan and the Philippines. United States workers seem to emphasize properties in their work environment that are instrumental in satisfying various needs while overseas workers tend to focus on those properties that are instrumental in getting the job done. You will remember that employees outside CONUS reported more satisfaction and more positive perceptions of management's effectiveness. Perhaps the task orientation with respect to the way employees see their jobs contributes to their positive perceptions. As an attempt to provide more insight with respect to the more positive perceptions of employees overseas, the interviews revealed that workers at centers in Japan and the Philippines had strong feelings about "just having a job" and their expectations about what their job should provide were lower. It is also of interest that the PWC in Hawaii frequently seems to be "in between" the U.S. and Japan in their attitudes and perceptions. This may indicate that employees in Hawaii are influenced culturally by both the east and west.

Overall, I think this study demonstrates a need for managers to consider differing cultural factors when designing and implementing their managerial practices. It is apparent from this study that motivators, levels of satisfaction and perceptions of organizational functioning are likely to differ as a function of culture. And, somewhat contrary to what would be expected given the language and cultural differences, American military management is perceived

as more effective and is more positively received by employees outside the continental U.S. than it is within. It must be recognized that if managerial practices are received and reacted to differently by members in different cultures, what serve effectively as motivators, or as rewards in one culture may be less effective for employees in another culture.

Table 1

Percentages of Workers Responding Negatively to Items Measuring Management Effectiveness

Item	Public Works Centers Location			
	CONUS (N=524)	Hawaii (N=123)	Japan (N=74)	Philippines (N=259)
Workforce/Management Agreement on Supervisory Practices	31.3	21.4	17.2	23.9
Management's Promptness in Making Decisions	22.7	16.4	14.0	10.5
Management's Success in Scheduling Work	32.8	18.8	5.3	8.4
Amount of Material Wasted	38.7	27.9	7.1	30.0

Table 2

Mean Factor Scores by Location

Factor	CONUS (N=524)	Hawaii (N=123)	Japan (N=74)	Philippines (N=259)
Satisfaction	-.36[a]	-.05	+.39	+.26
Esprit de Corps	-.24	-.00	+.48	+.25
Awareness of Reward Contingencies	-.16	-.13	+.20	+.27

[a]The more positive the score, the more the attribute exists.

Table 3

Rankings of Categories Generated from Responses to the Question Regarding Motivating Work Occurrences

Category	CONUS	Hawaii	Japan	Philippines
Feelings of Accomplishment	1	1	4	2
Workgroup Climate	2		5	
Tools/Equipment/Supplies		3	1	1
Respect/Recognition				3
Cooperative Coworkers	5			
Problem Solving/Job Challenge		2	2	5
Pay	3			
Social Aspects of the Job	4			
Respect from Supervisor			3	4
Liking the Job		4		
Physical Work Environment		5		

Table 4

Examples of Responses Falling Under Five of the
Top-Ranked Response Categories

Response Category	Examples of Responses
	Motivating Work Occurrences
1. Feelings of Accomplishment	Getting something impossible done on time. Doing a job well. Seeing good results Knowing my job. Putting accepted beneficial ideas into action. Producing Knowing I did a good job.
2. Workgroup Climate	Getting along with fellow employees. People help one another. High morale in work. Working in a friendly atmosphere. Good communication among workers. Sincere worker's attitudes. Friendly attitude of coworkers.
3. Tools/Equipment/ Supplies	Having all necessary tools and equipment. Fast procurement of materials. All materials are ready. Efficient tools and equipment. Complete equipment and no equipment breakdown. Ready materials and transportation.
4. Respect/Recognition	Worker respect. Good word from my boss. Management notices good work I'm doing. Supervisors acknowledge my completed work and are pleased. Being thanked for doing work in a shorter time. Employee rewarded deservedly. Asked to do a "special" job.
5. Cooperative Coworkers	Working with people in my trade area. Helping others with advice, tools, work. Group achievement of success. Cooperative coworkers. Work together as a good working team. Working together. Receiving good support from fellow workers.